

Application: 09/851,624
Filed: May 8, 2001
In Response to Office Action of: June 29, 2005
and Advisory Action of: September 9, 2005
Response Dated: October 5, 2005

I. AMENDMENT TO THE CLAIMS

9. This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

II. LISTING OF CLAIMS

1. (currently amended) A survey system for benchmarking surveys, comprising:

- a) a secure server, having a database,
- b) a network, connected to said secure server,
- c) at least one client user computer, connected to said network and in communication with said secure server, wherein said client user computer provides access for at least one client user, said client user having at least one objective to measure, and
- d) at least one respondent computer, connected to said network and in communication with at least said secure server, wherein respondent computer provides access for at least one respondent to respond to a plurality of released surveys,

wherein said client user computer executes computer programs which provide secure access to said secure server,

wherein said secure server executes computer programs whereby the client user, from said client user computer:

- i) creates or modifies a plurality of surveys, wherein each survey is comprises at least one question and each said question has a range of answer values and a goal value which is an answer value that corresponds to at least one of said objectives,
- ii) specifies wording for each question,
- iii) assigns a goal value for each question,
- iv) assigns a weight value for each question, wherein the sum of said weight values for each survey equals 100,
- v) releases a first released survey being a first version of at least one of said surveys,

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- vi) receives substantially instant results of a survey when any respondent responds to the first released survey, wherein said results include at least a first respondent index and a first survey index,
- vii) modifies the first released survey creating a second version,
- viii) releases a second released survey being the modified second version of the first released survey, and
- ix) receives substantially instant results of the second released survey when any respondent responds to said second released survey, wherein said results include at least another respondent index and a second survey index,

wherein said secure server executes computer programs whereby the respondent, from said respondent computer:

- x) views each question of at least one of said released surveys, and
- xi) responds to each question by selecting a respondent answer value from said range of answer values,

wherein said secure server executes computer programs which:

- xii) store said wording, range of answer values, and goal value for each question for each version of each survey in said database,
- xiii) present from said database said wording and range of answer values for each question to a first respondent responding to said first released survey to obtain a first set of answer values,
- xiv) store said first set of answer values in said database,
- xv) determine said first respondent index by tallying said first set of answer values by applying the corresponding goal value and weight for each question to the corresponding respondent answer value and calculating said first respondent index,
- xvi) store said first respondent index in said database,
- xvii) present from said database said wording and range of answer values for each question to another respondent responding to said first released survey to obtain a second set of answer values,
- xviii) store said second set of answer values in said database,

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- xix) determine a second respondent index by tallying said second set of answer values by applying the corresponding goal value and weight for each question to the corresponding respondent answer value and calculating said second respondent index,
- xx) store said second respondent index in said database,
- xxi) average all the respondent indices associated with said first released survey, including at least said first respondent index and said second respondent index to determine said first survey index,
- xxii) accept modifications from said client user for said modified version of at least said first released survey,
- xxiii) store said modified version in said database as said second released survey,
- xxiv) present from said database said wording and range of answer values for each question to any respondent responding to said second released survey to obtain a third set of answer values,
- xxv) store said third set of answer values in said database,
- xxvi) determine a third respondent index by tallying said third set of answer values by applying the corresponding goal value and weight for each question to the corresponding respondent answer value and calculating a third respondent index,
- xxvii) store said third respondent index in said database,
- xxviii) present from said database said wording and range of answer values for each question to any other respondent responding to said second released survey to obtain a fourth set of answer values,
- xxix) store said fourth set of answer values in said database,
- xxx) determine a fourth respondent index by tallying said fourth set of answer values by applying the corresponding goal value and weight for each question to the corresponding respondent answer value and calculating said fourth respondent index,
- xxxi) store said fourth respondent index in said database,

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xxxii) average all the respondent indices to said second released survey, including at least said third respondent index and said fourth respondent index to determine said second survey index, and

xxxiii) determine a trend of all the survey indices associated with versions of said first released survey, including at least said first survey index and said second survey index,

~~b) a plurality of survey indices, one index for each of said surveys;~~

~~c) at least one goal associated with said surveys, and~~

~~d) a plurality of weights, one weight for each of said questions, wherein each weight is determined in relation to said goal;~~

~~wherein each survey is different from each of said other surveys because at least one question in each survey has been modified from an earlier version of that particular survey or because each survey has at least one question that is different;~~

~~wherein a plurality of results of said surveys cannot be compared because of said modified questions or said different questions;~~

~~wherein each of said survey indices is calculated by applying the weight associated with each question to the answer value associated with each question;~~

whereby the client user obtains substantially instant results when any respondent responds to any version of any survey released by said client user, and

whereby the results of said surveys, which are different, can be compared over time using said survey indices, which transcend the differences in said surveys by converting the results of each survey to a number that is relative to predetermined benchmark value, such as 100, being an index value determined by applying the corresponding goal value and weight for each question to each goal value and calculating said benchmark value. instead of said results.

2. (currently amended) The survey system of claim 1 further comprising:

~~a) a secure server, and~~

~~b) a server web site, having a web server whereby said computer programs executed by said secure server interface to said network,~~

whereby said client user accesses the secure server using a web browser executed on said client user computer.

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3. (currently amended) The survey system of claim 2 further comprising a client web site,

wherein said secure server links said released surveys to said client web site,

whereby said respondent accesses any of said released surveys via said client web site using a web browser executed on said respondent computer, and

whereby said respondent answer values are submitted to said secure server from said web browser.

4. (currently amended) The survey system of claim 2 wherein said secure server further comprises a member database.

5. (currently amended) The survey system of claim 2 wherein said secure server further comprises a respondent database.

6. (currently amended) The survey system of claim 2 wherein said secure server further comprises a database comprising client respondent data or other data.

7. (currently amended) The survey system of claim 1 wherein said trend is shown in a graph,

whereby the client user views the trend graphically and visually compares the results of versions of said surveys released by the client user.

~~further comprising a survey builder wherein said survey builder allows a client member to perform:~~

~~a) at least one of define said goals or assign said weights to said questions; and,~~

~~b) at least one of create said surveys, add said questions to said surveys, modify said questions, or select options for said answers~~

8. (currently amended) A method of taking a survey whereby a ~~benchmark~~ survey index is maintained in a computer database on a first computer, said method comprising the steps of:

- a) designing a survey comprising at least one question, using a second computer wherein each said question has ~~an a~~ a goal answer value, and ~~said survey having at least one goal and a weight for each question,~~ wherein said goal answer value corresponds to an objective for said survey, and storing said question, goal answer value, and weight for each question in said survey in said computer database over a computer network,

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- b) releasing said survey to a plurality of respondents, to obtain a set of answer values from each respondent, wherein said set of answer values are entered into said computer database over a network using separate respondent computers,
- c) creating a ~~benchmark~~ said survey index based on applying said goal answer values and weights to said sets of answer values that make up said survey results received from said respondents,
- d) storing said ~~benchmark~~ survey index associated with said survey in said computer database, and
- e) providing substantially instant results of said survey including said sets of answer values and said survey index, from said computer database over a computer network to said second computer,

whereby a plurality of ~~benchmark~~ survey indices maintained in said computer database allows for comparison of different of versions of said surveys relative to said objective.

- 9. (original) The method of claim 8 further comprising a step of selecting demographics for a survey target.
- 10. (currently amended) The method of claim 8 further comprising a step of generating a graph based on said plurality of ~~benchmark~~ survey indices, whereby said surveys ~~can~~ are visually compared to determine trend information.
- 11. (original) The method of claim 8 wherein said survey results are obtained from a plurality of individuals who have entered into an agreement to respond to surveys.
- 12. (currently amended) The method of claim 11 wherein said individuals are respondent members, having provided demographic information along with said agreement.
- 13. (original) The method of claim 11 wherein said individuals are panelists, having been selected based on particular characteristics.
- 14. (currently amended) The method of claim 13 wherein said ~~individuals are~~ panelists are compensated for ~~the~~ their participation.
- 15. (new) A survey system comprising:
 - a) secure server,
 - b) a network, connected to said secure server,
 - c) a server web site, connected to said secure server and said network,

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- d) one or more client web sites connected to said network,
- e) one or more computers having web browsers, said computers connected to said network for accessing said server web site or said client web sites,

wherein said secure server further comprises a database management system comprising a plurality of databases including:

- i) a member database,
- ii) a client survey database,
- iii) survey templates database,
- iv) a client data database, having at least client respondent data, and
- v) a respondent member database,

wherein client users securely access said server web site via said network whereby said client users:

- vi) signup for survey memberships,
- vii) design one or more surveys, each survey comprising one or more survey questions, each survey question having a type selected from a predetermined plurality of types,
- viii) assign one or more objectives for each of said one or more surveys,
- ix) assign a weight to each question indicating the impact that the question has on the one or more objectives,
- x) assign a goal answer value to each question indicating the corresponding objective,
- xi) post said one or more surveys to the client web site associated with one of said client users,
- xii) obtain one or more reports with survey results, and
- xiii) maintain client data,

wherein respondent members securely access said server web site via said network to signup for respondent memberships,

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wherein said respondent members receive notification when said one or more surveys are posted and said respondent members respond to said notification by providing answers to the survey questions via the client web site,

wherein said respondent answer values are tallied by applying said goal answer values and weights to determine a number that represents said survey result for each one of said surveys, wherein said result is included in one of said reports,

whereby said client users obtain substantially instant, concurrent results of said surveys.

16. (new) The survey system of claim 15

wherein said client users select demographics to target survey respondents via said secure server, said selected demographics being stored in said client data database,

wherein said respondent members further comprise survey targets who match the desired demographics,

wherein said notification is sent only to said survey targets,

whereby said client users obtain said survey results from survey targets who match the desired demographics.

17. (new) The survey system of claim 15

wherein said respondent members further comprise panelists, having been selected based on particular characteristics, who have entered into an agreement to respond to surveys,

whereby said client users obtain said survey results from panelists having said particular characteristics.

18. (new) The survey system of claim 17

wherein said panelists are compensated for their participation in responding to surveys.

19. (new) A survey system comprising:

- a) secure server,
- b) a network, connected to said secure server,
- c) a server web site, connected to said secure server and said network,

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- d) one or more client web sites connected to said network, and
- e) one or more computers having web browsers, said computers connected to said network for accessing said server web site or said client web sites,

wherein said secure server further comprises a database management system comprising a plurality of databases including:

- i) a member database, and
- ii) a client survey database,

wherein client users securely access said server web site via said network whereby said client users:

- iii) signup for survey memberships,
- iv) design one or more surveys, each survey comprising one or more survey questions, each survey question having a type selected from a predetermined plurality of types,
- v) assign one or more objectives for a survey,
- vi) assign a weight to each question indicating the impact that the question has on the one or more objectives,
- vii) assign a goal answer value to each question indicating the corresponding objective,
- viii) store said surveys in said client survey database,
- ix) post said one or more surveys to the client web site associated with one of said client users, and
- x) obtain one or more reports with survey results,

wherein one or more individuals visiting one of said client websites is presented one or more surveys and becomes a respondent by providing answers to the questions of at least one survey,

wherein said respondent answer values are tallied by applying said goal values and weights to determine a survey index that represents said survey result for each one of said surveys, said survey index being stored in said client survey database,

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wherein said secure server generates a graph based on a plurality of said survey indices,

whereby said client user visually compares surveys to determine trend information relative to the objectives of said client user using said graph.

20. (new) The survey system of claim 15 wherein, after said client user designs a first design for one of said one or more surveys, said client user saves said first design as a custom template in said survey templates database, wherein said custom template comprises a set of survey components and parameters,

wherein said client user uses said custom template in the design of a subsequent design for one of said versions of said surveys,

whereby said client user uses said custom template to design subsequent versions of said one or more surveys,

whereby said subsequent versions share common components and parameters, and

whereby said subsequent versions are created more quickly.

21. (new) A survey system of claim 19, further comprising a survey templates database having a plurality of survey templates,

wherein, after said client user designs a first design for one of said one or more surveys using one of said plurality of survey templates, said client user saves said first design as a custom template in said survey templates database, wherein said custom template comprises a custom set of survey components and parameters, including formats for said surveys and said reports,

wherein said client user uses said custom template in the design of a subsequent design for one of said versions of said surveys,

whereby said client user uses said custom template to design subsequent versions of said one or more surveys,

whereby said subsequent versions of said surveys share common components and parameters, and

whereby subsequent versions of said reports and said graphs share common formats which are custom to said client user.